



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852

March 10, 1970

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL
ADMINISTRATION

Professor Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
Stanford University Medical Center
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Your undated inquiry requesting information on nitrilotriacetic acid (NTA) has been referred to this office. You were specifically interested in the source of Mr. Charles C. Johnson's remarks that NTA is 70% degradable and--so far as is known--without genetic or acute toxicity effects.

A copy of the report that was prepared by Dr. Benjamin Pringle of the Bureau of Water Hygiene and from which Mr. Johnson obtained his information has been mailed to you under separate cover. I am sure you will note large gaps in the spectrum of information. This illustrates quite succinctly one of our society's biggest problems, viz., ought not a rather complete study be made of any chemical that man's technology intends for general environmental distribution before the chemical is widely distributed?

You should be able to have a lot of fun with this topic in your Washington Post column since it leads to such questions as: What information should be required? Who should have the authority to require what tests for which products?

I enjoy your column very much and look forward to it every Saturday. I wish you well in this endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Harold W. Wolf, Dr. P.H.
Director
Division of Criteria & Standards
Bureau of Water Hygiene